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Emotions and hyper-masculine subjectivities: the role of affective sanctioning in
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Emotions and hyper-masculine subjectivities: the role of affective sanctioning in Glasgow Gangs

Abstract

Micro-interaction dynamics of affective sanctioning have received insufficient attention when exploring the emergence of masculine identities and practices among gang members. Our aim is to provide an analytical approach that places affective sanctioning at the heart of explanations of local masculine subjectivities. We demonstrate affective sanctioning as a key method through which gang members facilitate successful face-to-face interaction via the constitution of shared group status markers as collective 'goods'. Using empirical data contrasting two types of Glasgow gang groups, we show that, albeit sharing contexts in which similar structural determinants operate, each embodies idiosyncratic modes of masculine identity, characterised by distinct hyper-masculine traits, which in turn constitute the group's boundaries. Our primary focus is on the dynamics that *maintain* the group, rather than those that create it, and hence on how group *markers* emerge and are maintained by the constitutive force of individuals' mutual susceptibility to affective inter-valuation practices. Here the acts of *recognition and honouring*, and *dishonouring* are the most socially significant affective sanctioning mechanisms. Our methodological investigation rests on an 'intrinsic' structuralist approach which prioritises micro-situational data over wider structural arrangements. We contrast this with 'extrinsic' models which dominate current gang scholarship and which tacitly view individuals as socialised 'from the outside'. Our methodology and findings have profound implications for practitioners who must start from a recognition that individuals operate within the constraints of their emotionally bound group.

Key words: Masculinity, Emotions, Gangs, 'Intrinsic Structuralism', Methodology

Introduction

In this article we analyse how masculinities are constructed in particular geographical and situated collectives by focusing on two Glasgow gang groups - young street gangs (YSG) and serious organised crime groups (SOCGs). We argue that, albeit generating different types of masculine status markers, these two groups are permeated by similar mechanisms of negotiation regarding their masculine 'markers', leading to distinct masculine traits becoming accentuated within each group.

The authors first draw upon existing literature within the fields of masculinity and gangs to demonstrate the lack of attention that has been paid to the role of affective sanctioning as a powerful constitutive, internal 'mechanism' used by gang members in the creation and maintenance of group boundaries and their subjective identities. From here we follow Rafanell's (2013) analytical framework which combines conceptual tools drawn from social theory, with an emphasis on the micro-mechanisms present in all interaction dynamics as constitutive of both subjective

identities and collective practices. Such a framework highlights the micro-situational foundations of social phenomena - in our case the constitution of particular 'hyper-masculinities' characteristic of the two gang types presented here. It also emphasises the need to identify the 'methods' involved in the emergence of particular group status markers, neglected in much current scholarship. It is argued that these 'methods' are permeated by affective sanctioning inter-valuations. This theoretical claim partly rests on Scheff's (1988) work in which it is argued that shame and pride are the most socially significant emotions underpinning the constitution of a collective's normative standards and, consequently, the identities and practices of group members.

Using empirical data, we highlight how such affective sanctioning permeates the group, effecting an alignment of members' practices and thus generating group consensus. Our primary focus is on the dynamics that *maintain* the group, rather than those that create it. This is revealed by examining how a group of heterogeneous individual members adopt the emergent collective status markers which characterise the gang's distinctiveness. The empirical investigation uses an ethnomethodological approach which assumes that the existence of a 'stock of common-sense knowledge' shared by all individuals coexisting within a localised setting is constantly negotiated and underpins the strategies used to effectively communicate and exist as a group member. Such an approach allows us to identify how certain masculinities which display status markers that are distinctive and internal to the group become accentuated over others. For example, violent behaviour appears to be central to achieving masculine status among YSG members, whereas money and physical capital (in the form of hyper-developed physical musculature) are prioritised among members of SOCGs. We are also able to identify the gang's chosen 'artefacts' (such as knife carrying, expensive clothing and muscle building) as specific 'methods' which carry symbolic meaning that is shared among the members of each gang, generating a community existing in and through this common world of symbols. In particular, we argue that the distinct hyper-masculine identities emerging in each group rest on specific status markers internal to that group (Collins, 2000; Barnes, 1992).

Critically analysing existing gang literature and using such a novel framework to analyse gang practices, allows us to illustrate a particular analytical shortcoming prevalent in much sociological theorising, namely the tacit adoption of an 'extrinsic' macro-structuralist approach. Such an approach assumes an over-deterministic causality of the wider structural world over individual and collective practices. In presenting a more 'intrinsic' structuralist approach as an alternative, we conceptualise existing structural determinants as 'under-determining' action and practice, i.e. agency, and in doing so prioritise micro-situational data as prior to and constitutive of both individual action and wider external phenomena. Thus we are able to reveal the central role of affective sanctioning to the constitution of masculine identities and practices among the members of these gangs as situated in a particular 'life-world'.

Such findings are then used to draw out conclusions which highlight the important implications for both future analytical and empirical understandings of group creation, maintenance, and practices. At the practical level this analysis could usefully inform policy making and practice developments in this arena.

Critical analysis of existing research on gangs: an over-deterministic macro-structuralist approach.

Scotland's largest city, Glasgow, has an association with criminality, violence and anti-social behaviour (Davies, 2007) and continues to generate disproportionate levels of violence and organised crime compared to the rest of the country (Scottish Government, 2015). Housing more gangs than London (Deuchar, 2009), displaying an embedded knife culture, and hosting 70% of Scotland's organised crime (OC), Glasgow has come to epitomise tough masculinity amongst a predominantly male working-class population (Lawson, 2013; Scottish Government, 2009; VRU, 2011). Such masculinities are widely considered normative within Glasgow's post-industrial urban contexts (Skelton, 1997). Messerschmidt (1993) argues that for many working-class males, *doing crime* has come to be seen as *doing masculinity*. Tough masculinity, is best captured in the *hard man* image associated with the city which has a long-standing social value within this population (Whyte, 1998) and, in Glasgow, tough masculinities are put on display nowhere clearer than in the *gang* (Deuchar, 2009).

Offering an explanation of such phenomena, Holligan (2013) suggests that the display of tough masculinities amongst Glasgow's gang members is a manifestation of their *protest against* (and rejection of) wider masculine attributes regularly associated with middle-class values and resources – e.g. etiquettes, education, and arts appreciation. However, an important unintended effect of this anger towards the 'privileged' is that, in the gang context, successful engagement in delinquency and criminality can perpetuate these tough masculinities toward a state of *hyperization* whereby certain aspects are significantly accentuated, becoming 'toxic', that is, risky and detrimental to the individuals themselves (Kuper, 2005).

There is a growing scholarship in Scotland (and now across the UK) on the nature and dynamics of Glasgow gangs centred mainly in 'criminological' research (See Davies, 2007, 1998, 2013; Deuchar, 2009, 2013; Fraser, 2013; Holligan, 2013; Holligan et al, 2016; Lawson, 2013; McLean, forthcoming, Miller, 2015; Patrick, 1973). However, its genealogy derives from the US where criminological scholarship evolved out of, and eventually replaced, sociology as the main strand of criminal inquiry, reflecting the fact that gang and ex-gang members are repeatedly found to be directly responsible for the majority of crime, as well as displaying the longest and most diverse criminal careers (Bullock & Tilley, 2008).

The criminological approach can be broken into two main strands: administrative and cultural criminology. While the former is predominantly concerned with identifying what is and is not a gang using set criteria e.g. age, activities, self-labelling, and weapon carrying, the latter seeks to contextualise the gang by exploring interactions between structure and agent, and how social processes may contribute to gang formation (Jankowski, 1991). The administrative approach has proved particularly popular in the US, in turn significantly influencing how crime, delinquency and gangs are studied in Britain. Yet drawing, at times quite uncritically, upon transatlantic literature has distorted the way British gangs are perceived. Thus they are largely

presented as an already existing entity which is only to be discovered for the purpose of eradication (Hallsworth & Young, 2006).

The cultural approach, in contrast, focuses on wider structural components which give rise to cultural practices within certain populations that may underpin the emergence of a gang. Here the gang *is* understood as the product of wider structural phenomena such as the immediate urban environment (Alonso, 2004; Densley, 2013; Hagedorn, 1998), the broader economic context, or both (McLean, forthcoming). However, within both administrative and cultural approaches the role of interaction dynamics are seen as secondary to wider structural influences and gang formation is conceived as inevitable under certain structural conditions (Wacquant, 2009). In short, both not only prioritise but attribute a tacit over-deterministic causality to wider structural phenomena.

Steering away from gang research in the strictest sense, a few masculinity studies have adopted the gang as a central mechanism for studying masculine identity and the accentuation of certain masculine traits (Lawson, 2013; Holligan & Deuchar, 2009). However, even in studies emphasising the micro-phenomena of subjective identities, the gang is presented as an already present, largely stable entity, with no attention paid to either the dynamics of gang emergence and constitution, or the interplay between wider structures and individual practices. Nor are the micro-dynamics of interaction taking place amongst members of a situated gang, or how such interactions may shape the creation, maintenance and transformation of the gang itself, explored.

Therefore, we aim to analyse gang emergence and dynamics by focusing on the micro-dynamics of interaction present in the actions of contextually situated individuals within a collective. Here we draw on Phenomenology's revelation that what must be understood and investigated is not the presumed 'world out there' and how it impacts on individuals' actions, but rather how the actions and consciousness of individuals, in the process of making sense of their own situated realities, effectively construct, shape, transform and maintain the structurally external phenomena which circumscribe them. Such a 'bottom up' approach requires careful consideration of the micro-interactive dynamics among individual group members in their 'everyday' lives and assumes that social reality is inter-subjective (Schutz, 1972), that is, the world is a shared collective 'good' which involves different modes of learning, interpreting, communicating and negotiating among individuals. However, drawing on the work of Rafanell (2013), we offer a novel development of this theoretical insight, which is captured by the idea of an 'intrinsic structuralism'.

The micro-situational foundations of social phenomena: interactions and affective sanctioning

Micro-dynamics no doubt rest on a substantial amount of taken for granted knowledge and practices, sedimented over time and largely unquestioned (Schutz, 1972). However, we argue that such commonly accepted 'stocks of knowledge' do not constitute the totality of an individual's practices or consciousness, neither should they be seen as over-determining these. The analytical framework we present

argues that such a doxic (Bourdieu, 1995) world is the product of a multiplicity of actions taking place in and through individual interaction, rather than existing prior to and guiding them. A focus on the micro-dynamics of group interactions places a group's status markers centre stage. They become the vehicle that facilitates the inter-subjective world shared by group members. Hence, in this section we provide an analytical discussion which highlights the constitutive power of individuals' interactions, highlighting affective inter-valuation sanctioning as a key method used by individuals to align with one another, and in the process effect the constitution of collective 'goods' (or macro-phenomena).

Extrinsic versus intrinsic structuralist models: methodological implications

Rafanell (2013) argues that contemporary structuralist theory, perhaps exemplified by Bourdieu, prioritizes macro-structural determinants over micro-interaction dynamics. Such approaches are described as 'deistic' models that envisage the social world as created at some point and endowed with an 'inertia' (Bourdieu, 1995, p.130) which guides subsequent activity. They posit that once constituted, the practices of individuals 'can subsist without agents having to recreate them continuously' (Bourdieu, 1995, p.131). Habitus is the conceptual apparatus Bourdieu operationalises in order to explain both individual practices and subjectivities, and the determining force of the 'objective' world. Habitus is defined as a set of dispositional practices, emerging from early stages of infant socialization, which, once internalized and embodied, automatically generate patterned social practices. Such practices homogenise individuals, securing intra-group consensus, and reflecting and further re-constituting the wider objective conditions of existence in which they were created. In this sense the determining and causal features of individuals' practices are conceived as 'extrinsic'. In this model only inter-group relations generate conflict and sanctioning dynamics, often in the form of negative and derogative evaluations from groups higher up the social hierarchy in the form of symbolic violence. Such models thus explicitly reject interaction as constitutive, downplaying the calculative and reflexive basis of individuals' activities. Rather, all methodological attention is directed to identify those macro-systemic, structural phenomena which lie at the basis of individual practices. In particular, for Bourdieu, socio-economic origins feature prominently as a determining force. This is the tacit theoretical model present in both the administrative and cultural approaches to gangs described above.

In contrast, some analytical positions offer an understanding of social life as a process of 'continuous creation' resulting from the dynamics of social interaction. Traditionally characterized as members of Interactionist and Ethnomethodological schools, they argue that micro-situational data should be given conceptual priority over structural constraints. As Collins (2005, p.258) puts it macro data such as that relating to the distribution of income do not 'convey a very accurate picture of social reality unless it is interpreted in the context of its micro-attentional grounding'. This is a phenomenological position which understands that only by exploring what external factors actually *mean* in the lived experience of the individual is it possible to grasp the 'reality' that ensues. The important aspect to retain here is that similar objective conditions of existence generate *different* individual and collective practices.

However, in so far as interactionist accounts in particular have *not* provided a precise analytical explanation of the nature of the causal and constitutive role of individuals' interactions, they have been accused of neglecting structural constraints and over-estimating individuals' agency (Rafanell, 2013, p.182). Addressing this issue, Rafanell (2013, p.20) draws on Barnes (1992) and Bloor (2001), to argue that macro-structural phenomena must be seen as a pre-existing set of conditions which only 'under-determine' individuals' practices. Moreover it is in and through social interaction in a situated context that individuals learn, share, confirm, negotiate or contest the world that surrounds them. Individuals are understood in this model to act inductively (they observe their immediate world and make inferences out of it) and, necessarily, possess an awareness and calculative power of reflection necessary to learn, interpret, judge, evaluate, negotiate and adopt (or reshape) their practices and beliefs. Crucially, these calculative reflections are mediated by the force of the mutual sanctioning practices present among the members of a collective. Individuals respond to other inter-valuations by adapting their behaviour to that of other group members with whom they interact thus generating an alignment with them, from which consensus and collective phenomena emerge. It is in this sense that macro-phenomena are seen as 'intrinsic' to micro-interaction dynamics. Individual micro-interactions are thus understood as prior and re-constituting. They generate and maintain wider structural phenomena but only from the activity of a *collective of interconnected* individuals. Central to this collective inter-valuation activity is the particular mechanism of affective sanctioning.

Social sanctioning and the emergence of social/collective phenomena

Such an analytical framework allows us to foreground a dimension of micro-situational empirical dynamics - the omnipresence and constitutive role of affective sanctioning. Scheff's (1988) work attempts to theorise the role of affective sanctioning in the constitution of both subjective individual and structural phenomena. Harnessing insights from Goffman (1956) that ubiquitous in all encounters is the constant checking of each other's responses to our actions, - especially signs of recognition, acceptance, deference, rejection, withdrawal of respect, ridicule, etc. - Scheff's central claim is that shame and pride are at the heart of all human contact and, despite being individually experienced as intimate, they are key to the regulation of social life. He posits that humans are vulnerable to the judgements of others, but *in particular* approval or disapproval. They seek to avoid negative evaluations and a subsequent 'loss of face' by reshaping their own practices. For Scheff, such a 'deference-emotion system' not only governs individuals' practices, but also constitutes social life and systemic structural phenomena in the wider sense. Affective sanctioning in the shape of shaming and priding functions to guarantee the alignment of thoughts, feelings and actions among individuals as they strive to belong (Scheff, 1988, p.400) and is used by group members to constrain and sanction 'deviant' interpretations which may lead to differing practices.

These authors provide an analytical insight which conceives the social as in a continuous mode of constitution, maintenance and transformation, however minute and invisible to the single individual actor. It offers a 'continuous creation' model which sees macro-phenomena as intrinsic to the micro-dynamics of social interaction.

Status markers as collective goods and key mechanisms of achieving consensus and collective life

Bourdieu has valuably contributed to our understanding of how social life is embedded in the corporeality of the individuals. He argues that central to understanding how a shared or 'sub-' culture emerges from a situated group is the identification and analysis of the role of such embodied status markers. It is through careful analysis of how these operate that we understand how, so constituted, a collective good shapes the practices of its members.

Moreover, from a different analytical tradition, Collins (2000, 2005) has argued that situated collectives act as 'status groups', effecting a compelling force upon individuals' beliefs and practices via the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion based on the possession or not of the group's existing 'status markers'. Such markers should be seen as constitutive of the group's boundaries. As Barnes (1992) puts it, individuals seek the 'good opinion' of fellow members only; outsiders' opinions not being deemed 'worthy'. Hence, status group markers signal and symbolise the shared common stock of knowledge, language and conceptual machinery that makes sense of the world of group members, or group 'culture'.

Saunders (2005, p.281) adds that what he terms 'status symbols' are very much situated and are often contingent and fluid. As such they must be continuously maintained. Moreover, their meaning is always contextual, so the same action or embodied marker acquires different meanings in different contexts.

In the following sections we show that particular forms of embodied 'hyper-masculine' traits and practices are key status markers for the gangs we examine. They act as markers of group boundaries, of the status of individual group members, and as key organisers of collective behaviour. They are precarious in nature and have to be continually maintained, generating a continuous 'norming' of the practices and beliefs of individual group members. They circumscribe and shape individual experience but in doing so they constitute the larger social phenomena in which these individuals operate.

Methodology

Life-worlds, status makers and the dynamics of belonging and exclusion

Adopting an 'intrinsic' structuralist model generates a particular understanding of individuals' group membership as local, contextual and permeated by dynamics of inter-valuation between group members. Above all, it demands an approach that focuses on the collective rather than the individual, in recognition that the constitutive force of individuals' lived experience resides with that collective. It follows that individuals' actions must be investigated as responses to the other members of a collective given that it is in and through interaction that individuals change behaviour, thus generating the collective phenomena that circumscribe them.

The methodological approach adopted therefore focuses on identifying two general aspects from the empirical data: the collective 'goods' emerging from the group; and the methods by which they come to exist, that is the sanctioning mechanisms.

Collective goods:

Identifying the group's status markers which sustain membership is key to illuminating what underpins the practices of individual members. This is particularly important as it shows the constraining and constitutive force of the collective upon individual practices, and how the collective goods are *themselves* reinforced and maintained in the process. Intuitively we understand members of gangs as belonging to a closed group with its own internal dynamics. As such the compelling force that the group's status markers have upon individuals who fear being ostracised from the group if they do not adopt them, may explain a particular practice *but also* what appears to be irrational behaviour in so far as it looks to an outsider to have more negative than positive consequences for that individual. This apparently irrational behaviour must be understood, however, as engaging in action that is very much rational and calculative in so far as it facilitates inclusion, and guards against expulsion which can result in the loss of the social self. Here an ex-member may function outside the gang but must find and construct himself as a *different* social actor, something which is often a very challenging task.

Sanctioning mechanisms: identifying the inter-valuation methods in the situated lived experience

Following Barnes' (1992) methodological suggestions, we have also sought to identify data which reveals the mechanism by which group members create practical collective action and mutual understanding. Our empirical data analysis thus uses the following coding themes: a) how the group produces its own *structuring*. This would involve analysing the claims that group members make on potential 'outsider' responses and how they pressure internal practices. Crucial here is what and who become legitimised, praised, silences, ostracised, etc., and what 'shared' culture of meanings facilitate such communicative interactions; b) how exactly the individuals of the group *sanction* each other's verbal and non-verbal behaviour. This would also involve identifying the existence of positive evaluations of fellow members and the rejection of outsider opinions as signifiers of group membership; c) how *norming* is achieved. This encompasses an investigation of the formation of 'life-styles', that is, shared or distinctive language which confines communicative interaction to group members. How a sense of 'special' honour emerges is central, granted by virtue of being a group member who adopts the group's status makers; and d) how *embedding* takes place, here referring to the positive emotional 'associations' which effect a cognitive attunement among gang members.

Gathering Data

The data analysed is drawn from a larger study exploring Glasgow gang organization. Interviewees were filed into two distinct gang types in accordance with Police Scotland gang criteria. These are *Young Street Gangs* (YSGs) and *Serious*

Organised Crime Groups (SOCGs). While no official definition exists, YSGs are considered young territorial outfits engaged in violence (VRU, 2011), while SOCGs are adult groups *'involve[ing] more than one person.... [which] organize.... [and] cause significant harm.... [for] financial gain'* (Scottish Government, 2015).

To access participants, street workers attached to outreach projects on Scotland's West Coast were used as gatekeepers, yet following difficulties associated with accessing hard-to-reach populations (Bhopal and Deuchar, 2016) a snowball sampling technique was then deployed whereby interviewees were asked to recommend additional contacts in an effort to access wider sample populations.

In total, in-depth interviews were conducted with 34 male participants, aged 16-27 years, from working-class neighbourhoods in Glasgow. Data was recorded via audio devices and provides insights into both the ways internal group dynamics construct perceptions of what it is to *'be a man'*, and the status markers used to define manhood in relevant group settings. Deploying open-ended interview techniques allowed the interviewees to convey their distinct subjective experiences, in turn allowing micro-interactions to be analysed and the impact of affective sanctioning to be understood at the individual level.

Empirical Analysis

To analyse the data copies of the transcripts were read and re-read several times, by each of the researchers independently, with a view to identifying which practices achieved group structuring, norming and embedding, and exploring the particular role of affective sanctioning in these processes. Individual sections of the data were then linked together across transcripts. The researchers then compared their individual transcript analyses, discussing the emergent themes in turn, in order to identify that material which connected to the construction of status markers, and the methods and processes of affective sanctioning used in interaction between members of the two gang types under scrutiny. Several sub-themes located within the overarching theme of affective sanctioning and the social construction of masculinity emerged through discussion and the further interrogation of the data under this lens. Firstly, it was found that: a) when constructing YSG masculine identity, prevalent tough masculinities became accentuated within the group context with certain status markers being used in accordance with gang type; b) tough masculine identity was refined and continually redefined through direct interactions with valued group peers; and c) the (re)negotiation of masculinity occurred through the dynamics of interaction, predominantly permeated by affective sanctioning mechanisms. In addition, members of both gang types primarily desired social status. For the YSG members, this was achieved by engagement in delinquency, often through violence, and hyper-gendered stereotypes. For older SOCG members, status was again desired, but achieved through the acquisition of wealth, rather than delinquency or violence *per se*. However, the *potential* to commit violence was also a status marker, even where no actual violence occurred.

The analysis compares and contrasts two gang types (YSGs and SOCGs) in an effort to analyse how groups construct different tough masculinities, and illustrates

how certain status markers became elevated or demoted within specific localised contexts.

YSG Findings

Constructing YSG masculine identity

In Glasgow's traditionally working-class housing estates, youths typically lack the financial resources to engage in mainstream, legitimate society. Thus, eager for peer and at times wider status recognition, young adolescent males involved in YSGs tap into those resources at their disposal. This manifests itself in territorial violence whereby YSGs fight rival outfits in an effort to attain internal peer status (Patrick, 1973). As Fraser (2013) has already captured, YSG members seek local peer status through violent acts towards rival outsider gangs, showing their willingness to confront any situation with an aggressive response.

Such behaviour is also reflected in a number of (auto)biographical accounts given by notorious Glasgow gangsters such as Paul Ferris and Jim Boyle, all of whom reflect upon their time as YSG members as one characterized by regular violence in efforts to attain status (Boyle, 1977; Ferris & McKay, 2001). The fact that such behaviour has been going on for such a long time in this geographical area and still persists reflects the need to continually reinforce the precarious nature of one's status within a YSG collective. For these individuals the practice of violence is the method used to achieve the group status marker necessary for group inclusion and belonging. This is reflected by the enhanced awareness YSG members possess of the practice itself. Participants Sack, Mo, and Bill illustrate this during interviews while discussing reasons for territorial conflict:

'It's a buzz. You get a high from chasing the [rival gang]. Your [friends] all see you as well, [so] they kind of see it and think "fuck [interviewees name] is mental", so you get respect for being gallas (visibly displaying bravery in face of danger) Where I come from that gets you [a reputation]. People see you and you're like the [hard] man eh (laughs)' – Sack.

'Best fighter is always top guy (the group leader). Well no always, if someone is mental (fearless and vicious) he is probably top bloke. Always centres on fighting but.....doesn't mean they are the most popular' – Mo.

'We just fight, man. It is what we do, know.... Can't explain it. If you aren't from here, you wouldn't understand.... Fighting is what Glesga (Glasgow) boys do in schemes.... Kind [of] expected from you' - Bill.

Violence is used as the key status marker for peer recognition and is epitomised by working-class adolescent males in YSGs as the pinnacle of 'tough' masculinity. Violence is often narrated as a way to 'celebrate' their working-class heritage but, more significantly, is a way to configure group boundaries. Belonging to a group is an existential survival necessity for these individuals. The threat of exclusion of those who do not engage in YSG violence but engage in more socially acceptable leisure activities is always present in their accounts. Statements by Rydo and Len when

asked if they and their YSG peers would engage in acceptable forms of leisure if presented with the opportunity to do so illustrate this point:

'Rock-climbing (laughs), that shit [is] for poofs mate. My mates (YSG peers) would slag fuck out me if I said let's go rock-climbing. Well ditched (ostracised from group) Nah you don't do that if you're from Glasgow If it isn't got [females], booze, and fighting forget it' – Rydo.

'Do you mean like to going to opera, or out for dinner? You're having a laugh. Snobby cunts do that.... No us (YSG)' - Len.

Sexist, homophobic and negative classist appraisals are part and parcel of their narrative of inclusion and exclusionary practices. What it is to be a 'real' man in this context is one that excludes anything that may be deemed feminine, non-heterosexual and middle class. Violent life-style choices become very much the symbolic currency of belonging. Rydo and Len recognise that more socially acceptable leisure activities are not readily accessible to them and are very aware of their lack of financial resources. However, when asked directly about the reasons why they engage in violent practices this does not feature in their narratives. Even if they had such opportunities they are clear in their rejection of them, attributing this to the fact that such social practices are unacceptable within their peer group. The language used is telling, such leisure activities are for '*snobby cunts*': in two words they convey a despising and demeaning attitude to both members of the other sex and other classes as a way to enhance a 'tough' masculinity which they know defines the very essence of manhood among their peers.

Such narratives are evident among youth workers seeking to help young males disengage from YSG violence. '*Boys will be boys*' and '*fighting is a normal lad behaviour*' were common statements by youth workers interviewed (Shrug, Tiny and Aldo). Even for youth workers seeking to disengage YSG members from violent and potential criminogenic practices the recognition that the development of 'tough' masculinity via violent practices is normalised within these groups is clear. From an outsider's standpoint, this is a paradoxical attitude – as it could arguably be seen as legitimising such behaviour. Another interpretation, following our methodological premise, is that youth workers are also 'insiders' of this sub-culture of normalisation of 'tough' masculinity, sometimes even having been gang members themselves. Their statements reflect a form of *embedding* which reveals the cognitive attunement with the YSG itself. Evidence thus clearly suggests that among Glasgow's YSGs, violence is most definitely a, if not *the*, status marker, used to construct tough masculinities which become the currency of the group.

Affective Sanctioning as creating, reinforcing, and negotiating masculinity in YSG

Sanctioning mechanisms used to constitute hyper-masculine identity are embedded within localised lingo, conveying extreme rejection of that which is considered to be in direct opposition. In the context of tough masculinities at the level of YSGs, this is the rejection of those traits associated with being feminine. In this respect Holligan (2013) has noted that feelings which are associated with femininity undergo emotional conversion to that which is deemed their masculine equivalent i.e.

aggression for hurt, anger for frustration, and violence for fear. Wee J captures this point when asked to describe what makes a man a 'man':

'Dunno really. You're just a guy aren't you! Prob[ably] no acting like a burd (female), I think. Get me mate, aye. Burds. Burds like greet and are pure emotional man. Guys cannot be doing that. Like I've never seen my dad cry or nothing. My mum but I dunno, I would expect it.....No sure how I would feel if I [was to see] my dad like crying' – Wee J.

Wee J's statement illustrates a reoccurring theme throughout the interviews. Women are construed as lacking the emotional control which men must possess. Within the group dynamics of YSGs, the rejection to all that is feminine as way to redefine masculinity is done through the use of extremely demeaning sexist language as a way to 'shame' the non-compliant group member. Words like 'bitch', 'cunt' and 'pussy', and homophobic language – words like 'Faggot', 'Gayboy', 'Homo' - were used to not only demote the manhood of others within the YSG, but also to simultaneously elevate their status by being the labeller. Sack sums this up when asked about a recent gang fight where his peers fled:

'I wouldn't run man eh. Fuck. Got the bruises to prove it anol (laughs).....Only faggots run. Like if you run away and get chased its cause you're a shitbag isn't it? My mates ran away, Wee [gang member A] and [gang member B] ran away man. Know what am saying? Bitched it' – Sack.

Negative appraisals of those members who flee violence are thus a method often used to constitute the internal masculine status marker, which conveys belonging, group status and subjective masculine identity. Violence is key to the hyperisation of masculine identity among the YSG members; it is at the heart of their narratives, whether by perpetrating or being on the receiving end of it. Sack establishes his own group position by applying shaming labels to his fellow gang members, feminizing their actions and thus further reinforcing a tough masculine identity. This process of negative sanctioning also works to discourage future transgressions, effecting a greater alignment of members' behaviours. The continuous nature of this process of redefining masculine identity illustrates that individuals have not been socialised into particular practices once and for all. On the contrary, the existence of a continuous narrative of positive and negative appraisals reveals the conditional and temporary nature of group membership. Identities are not fixed, they undergo a continuous process of socialisation in and through the situated interactional experience. Mellow's account illustrates this point, when he admits to feeling compelled to engage in what is potentially risky and violent behaviour for fear of being negatively evaluated and thus losing status within the peer group:

'I was smashing [house] windows [with friends]. Remember I seen the [male house owner] in his house looking right at me [through the window] mate, but my pals were saying shit like "we thought you were meant to be the maddie (engages in particularly risky behaviour)".... so I just launched [the brick] right through. Think [the brick] whacked his TV as well [once it went through his Livingroom window and into the house]the guy was fuming.... [He] walked right out [the main door to his house] and hooked (punched) me in the face' – Mellow.

SOCG Findings

Constructing Masculinity in SOCG

While both SOCGs and YSGs construct a hyperised masculinity, the former structure group boundaries differently from the latter. Although violence still retains some importance, not least by virtue of their previous membership of YSGs, economic standing becomes a primary status marker. Former YSG and SOCG member Shrug emphasises the distinction:

'No cunt cares about fighting and that shite when you get older.... Course it's important [that] you can handle yourself (commit violence when necessary) but you don't go looking for it [like I once did while in YSGs] People (SOCG peers) would just think you're an idiot and want nothing to do with you.... Fighting is for young boys. Men commit crimes more for money.... [as an adult] you need [money]' – Shrug.

Deprioritising violence as a status marker becomes a rite of passage to adulthood. Other considerations have a role in this change of practices, for example as individuals get older they assume a degree of 'adult' responsibility, for long-term partners, children, bills, etc., which demand financial commitment. Adolescent males in YSGs are typically under 16 years of age (VRU, 2011) and thus are too young to live independently of their parents/guardians. They cannot legally own or rent property, enter legitimate employment, or even claim benefits; they are completely dependent upon parental finances. Therefore, individual wealth is not a status marker of choice for this group:

'You don't give two fucks how much [money] someone has when you're [a youth]. No like it is theirs, it's their [parental guardian's money] just more to rob [off them], I guess (laughs) Having good cloths or trainers [when an adolescent] is good man, aye, but people don't, like respect you for it, obviously your [parental guardian] has [purchased these goods] for you' – Wullie.

What Wullie reveals is that awareness of financial power exists but it is dependent upon one's parents, not one's own practices. Therefore for this group economic status is substituted with violence as a means to achieving internal peer recognition. Even when the possibility to engage in drug dealing practices which may lead to financial reward is there, the practice does not appear to be very attractive:

'I didn't start dealing proper till I was [18 years of age]. I tried when I was 14.... maybe 15.... was pure young but. Pure too stupid to [successfully deal drugs] I was taking [the drugs instead] and falling about the streets. Giving them away, to mates, giving them for fuck all.... think [I lost] more [money] than [I made] at that age' – Lace.

Some authors have suggested the inability to engage successfully in organised crime (OC) is due to the physiological underdevelopment of cognitive capacities (making them unable to successfully plan, organise, discipline themselves, etc.)

(Densley, 2012; Hagedorn; 1988). It is questionable that such capabilities are neurologically impossible in a 14 or 15 year old individual; more convincing is the interpretation that the interaction dynamics among peers do not value such practices, and therefore they are not developed. As the case of Lace shows, once he moved (due to age) to a new group, the cognitive ability needed to partake in successful OC was swiftly acquired. Once it is, violence is then seen as potentially detrimental to business (MacLean, forthcoming). Economic status therefore becomes the primary status marker as it symbolises clearly to the peer group both success and efficient business management. Such a status marker, however, acquires a further dimension among SOCG members: how the money is earned is also a marker of 'tough' masculinity necessary to gain group membership. Mick draws attention to how wealth is unimportant per se when discussing how he and the researcher earn similar wages, yet nevertheless the researcher would still be regarded as an outsider:

'No like we (referring to SOCG) would just hang about with (let into group) people [be]cause they have money.... You (talking to the researcher) probable earn a fair amount, probably same as me.... but not [as] though we would start hanging out (socialising) cause what we earn is the same. How you earn your money isn't the same as how I earn mine.... [how money] is earned matters. Group way people that do likewise know' – Mick.

Wealth is not accumulated to be hidden away, but rather to be shown off. Being able to display luxurious goods (cars, designer clothing, jewellery, etc.) acquires symbolic communicative currency about one's standing within the group. Peer status is determined by the power to consume:

'See if am driving a Merc[edes], got the best gear (cloths) on, designer shit. Course it means I've the money to buy it.....If you are wearing the best shit and driving beamers (BMW car), none of that old fucking Nova (Vauxhall Nova car) crap. Your business doing well. Cunts see that and know not to fuck about' – Boab.

In engaging in such practices, SOCG members constitute a shared 'life-style' which acts as a signifier of both group status and of belonging, thus also reinforcing group boundaries.

[Affective Sanctioning as creating, reinforcing, and negotiating masculinity in SOCGs](#)

The practice of paying your way and making obvious displays of wealth are ubiquitous amongst SOCG members. Denigrating those male members who do not engage in such displays is key to establishing and re-establishing central group status markers:

'I do think [men] are the wage earners, you know. Women can pure earn money as well, course, but it's kind of the [man] who is meant to be bringing in the wage isn't it.... I wouldn't have a women pay for nothing for me.... It just isn't accepted in my social circle [to be reliant on female partner financially] - Derek.

'One of the boys we use to hang about way was a heavy sponge (took goods from others without paying back) We [SOCG] all ended up knocking fuck out him and telling him to get to fuck but. Was pure making us look bad man, sponge from cunts'. – Diesel.

Crucially, the dissenting behaviour is seen to reflect badly on the whole group. Sanctions must be applied. Having a lack of consuming power is negatively sanctioned through shaming, particularly by the use of homophobic and misogynistic denigrating labelling. While speaking about a rival, Boab says:

'That cunt fae my way. Loud mouth fucking faggot. Always chanting shit. Skinny wee bastard. Probably shafting his arse way a pole right now (laughs). Every cunts know, he's a faggot. [Got his] windows put in off wee guys. Took it like a pussy as well. What gangster sells chopped council (poor quality cocaine), wearing shitty Primark loafers (cheap shoes) and sporting a Gola beard (a poorly styled beard) eh' – Boab.

Not being able to efficiently make money through crime is deemed deplorable for a member of this SOCG and something used as a way to re-establish the group's boundaries. At one and the same time, positive reinforcement is practised when members embody this group status marker:

'Am no[t] the pure jealous type, honest.... I like my mates doing well.... Like [SOCG peer] got a good deal on the go a while back for us [with] some guys we use to be like in pure compo (competition) with.... Proved to be a no bad wee earner (earned SOCG financial reward) Think the [group compliments] Have went to his head a bit but (laughs) [be]cause he has been trying to set up deals and backhanders with every cunts ever since' – Dee.

An important symbol of this collective status marker is expensive clothing. Although the sharing of group dress codes is ubiquitous among all collectives in the social world - a marker of group belonging and thus group boundary making - it is particularly illuminating that in the case of this SOCG. The mechanism acquires an explicit nature, and is re-narrated by group members continuously to further reinforce group belonging:

'I do always try and dress in the best gear (clothing).... Can be pure heavy expense, man.... Suppose it does keep up the image.... If I [was to] dress like a jake (a poor person) I would be treated like one.... [I] dress in Ralph Lauren, and Armani, and shit.... [It] is just kind of me and my mates' styles you know. I use to pure dress more like a professional cunt, know but [SOCG peers] where always ripping (making fun of) for doing so.... Like saying I thought I was a doctor or that shit (laughs).... Got to look like a dealer suppose for people to take yo[u] seriously' – Derek.

Considering the issue of exclusion and/or exit from the group, the data illustrates how partaking in practices that are not internally accepted and recognised by the group often results in ostracism, which then presents the challenge of creating a new identity for the excluded. One respondent discussed how difficult it was for him to reinvent himself. Having become involved in a second gang, and finding its practices did not sit easily with him, he attempted to re-engage more exclusively with his original gang. However, given the practices of the second gang were not recognised status markers for the first, he was unable to return:

'When I hung about with [SOCG 2] you'd get up to all sorts man. Get pure involved, know. Like kidnappings and torturing people that owed [drug] debts. It wasn't nice man.... I wanted to get the fuck out of that shit, know man. It wasn't who I was.... I just wasn't who I was anymore. Can't get away from it easy but. Can't just walk away, no one wants to have anything to do with you. No even old mates. Think you're too much trouble. All I had was [SOCG 2] I had to end up just leaving it and being a pure loner. Took years to, like literally reinvent myself' – Paul.

By adhering to SOCG2's violent practices, Paul is excluded from his original gang, not formally by his co-members, but rather by the very operation of the gang's collective 'goods'. Group belonging and exclusionary practices are revealed to be fluid, in a continuous mode of negotiation and constitution. Moreover, in not wanting to remain associated with the practices of SOCG2, Paul finds himself isolated from all that he has known. This has significant existential consequences as his original social self is lost. Confronted with social isolation, he experiences a loss of masculine identity so profound he loses his whole sense of self. As the data has been illustrating, for these individuals masculine identity is ontologically equivalent to one's core essence and very being. This experience is mirrored by Steg:

'feel lost mate. It all exciting when you're involved [with crime]. You feel like you're on a constant high, you know what am saying? Like [crime] is what men do.... What I done since [desisting from crime] I struggle mate to be honest. Pure struggle.... [to] even know who I am.... [being a criminal] was who I was.... now am a straight (a law-abiding citizen) but am a nobody' – Steg.

Partaking in the internally valued and shared group's status markers and practices generates a sense of belonging which is central to the development of a secure sense of self. In this particular case, engaging in tough masculine practices such as OC was narrated as experiencing almost a sense of omnipotence, even though most of these individuals ended up receiving multiple charges and convictions which had negative consequences for them. Yet, what mattered for these individuals was not so much the potential risk of being convicted and imprisoned but the recognition of their peers, even if this implied engaging in forms of behaviour and of being a 'man' which were potentially self-destructive. This apparently irrational and unreasonable attitude can only be comprehended by the fact that the social self, constituted by being a member of their group, acquires existential weight, becoming more important

than being a member of the wider society. Group belonging must thus be seen as key to subjective identity formation and to the very existence of the social being.

Conclusion

We have argued that existing gang scholarship largely neglects to investigate those interactions which create, (re)produce and maintain gangs and the hyper-masculine identities which prevail within the gang context. Our contribution has been to present empirical data which illustrates the prevalence of a hyperised masculinity within gang collectives in the Glasgow area, but also to analyse how such sub-cultures are produced through the interaction dynamics of specific, localised group contexts. Central has been the application of a new analytical framework which reconsiders the dichotomy between structure and agency. We argue that wider structural phenomena only 'under-determine' individual activity.

Such an approach take us away from accepting the gang as an existing reified entity constituted by wider external structural factors which, once constituted, then guide the practices of its members. It also opens up the possibility of looking through a lens of micro-interactive dynamics among gang-affiliated individuals in order to understand that membership is not an either or status, nor is it a one-way causality from the macro features to the micro activity. The argument we have made is for an 'intrinsic' structuralist model, where individuals are seen as in a continuous mode of socialisation, in and through the interactional experiences occurring throughout their situated lives. That is to say that micro-situational data, as Collins (2005) puts it, must take 'conceptual priority' over macro-structural phenomena.

This is not to say that gangs do not operate within a wider context where masculinities are defined and valued through, for example, the devaluing of feminine or homosexual traits, the use of hyper-masculine features, and the construction of normative narratives. However, only by exploring what external factors actually *mean* to the lived experience of the situated individual is it possible to grasp the 'reality' that ensues. What we have tried to demonstrate is that such 'reality' and the contexts in which it exists are always in a continuous mode of negotiation, redefinition and re-constitution. Central to our 'intrinsic' model is the emphasis on the constitutive power of the collective, not the single isolated individual.

We have used the example of gang collectives to illustrate the key role of affective sanctioning mechanisms, in particular those relating to honouring and priding. The interactional experiences of gang members are permeated by affective inter-valuations which underpin the formation of masculine subjective identities and the collective norms that circumscribe them. But these are precarious in so far as they are not developed once and for all, but need to be constantly renewed. Such an approach directs attention to the methods in use within the collective from which those group status markers emerge that are necessary to generate group consensus and boundaries, *and* facilitate communicative interaction.

Whilst our work is potentially significant for policymaking, given the complex nature of this terrain, the multiple factors and actors at play and the ongoing debates about the competing and often contradictory objectives of policy, exploring these is beyond

the remit of this paper. However, what can be stressed here are the profound implications the methodology and findings presented have for practice. Where practitioners seek to engage with gang members with a view to identifying and thus opening up alternative opportunities and futures, we argue that they must start from a recognition that individuals operate within the constraints of their emotionally bound group. Pride and honour markers are what primarily govern their behaviours. So rather than them being viewed as pathological, irrational individuals, they must be seen as engaging in rational and calculative practices which make total sense in their particular situated context. Here the development of hyper-masculine identities - albeit varying across different types of gang groups, as illustrated here - has an internal logic. So, externally defined and imposed behaviour modification-type interventions at the individual level will necessarily achieve little in so far as they do not acknowledge the collective grounding of gang members' realities.

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